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## PROBLEMS OF PHILANTHROPY IN CHICAGO

At the very beginning of an attempt to point out the problems of philanthropy in a community, the need of definition is encountered. If the occasion does not require scientific exactness, the writer must at least avoid confusion by indicating clearly the assumption which forms the basis of discussion. What is a problem of philanthropy as distinguished from other municipal problems? Questions concerning poor relief may doubtless be assigned to the field of philanthropy, although the principles of economics and government involved are of importance. The wisdom of prohibiting the use of boulevards by freight trucks would not be considered a problem of philanthropy. But between easily classified extremes lie many questions of vital consequence, whose solution must be sought through an indivisible union of forces of which philanthropy is one. Without attempting sharp delineations then, and for the purpose of this article, those questions which arise from the desire to bring within the reach of the less fortunate, the opportunity and the ability to share and appreciate those advantages which the more fortunate enjoy, will be regarded as problems of philanthropy.

Chicago is just beginning to emerge from the period of intense commercialism which was the inevitable chief characteristic of a community driven forward at terrific speed by irresistible, economic forces. Opportunity was denied for that symmetrical, rounded development which comes of slow growth. The men who made Chicago were not wealthy, yet the demand for huge capital with which to stem and control the overwhelming tide of commerce that poured in upon the young city was fierce and insatiable. In the midst of the struggle came the fire with its loss of \$200,000,000. The growing commerce must be retained at any cost. Indebtedness was piled mountain high. Thousands who had seen daylight ahead had to begin all over again. In the thirty-two years which have elapsed since the fire, the debts have been paid or reduced to reasonable proportions. Wealth has accumulated. The men who fought the battle are relaxing the strain of conflict and finding time for new interests apart from money-making. They have given to

their sons and daughters those opportunities for culture which they could not afford for themselves. The sons and daughters, educated, broad of view, possessed of a sense of civic responsibility, are now assuming that power and influence which promise to bring steadily forward, into their proper importance and relations, those finer features of municipal life whose development requires quiet, patient, unhurried cultivation. In truth the indications are unmistakable that the city is entering on a new era in which large recognition will be given to all that goes to soften and beautify existence.

On the threshold of this new life, Chicago, with youth, enthusiasm, resources and a desire for better things, is face to face with a problem on whose determination depends the manner in which many, one might almost say all, other problems of philanthropy will be met. It is whether the future growth in matters of philanthropy is to be on deep and broad foundations, in the laying of which the forces and intelligence of the community unite, or is to be spasmodic, individual, according to the impulse of the hour. Shall the philanthropic resources be expended according to a comprehensive scheme for beautifying the city and improving its conditions of life? Or shall each impulse spend itself in meeting a real or fancied need, often local or transient, without regard to large, well-considered plans for general improvement? One course means the gradual creation of a connected, properly related and distributed system of philanthropies, in which every social and intellectual need will be met according to its extent and importance; the conserving of resources by economies in administration and the avoidance of unnecessary multiplication of social agencies having the same objects. The other course means the absence of system or symmetry; large provision for small needs and small provision for large needs; the duplication of agencies for the advancement of the fleeting popular cause and the lack of help for needs, sordid, deep-seated, undramatic. Few great cities have had Chicago's opportunity to choose in this matter. Usually the philanthropies have grown as the community has grown, without system or plan, but Chicago's backwardness has left it a comparatively clear field. But who is to prepare the large scheme here suggested and how is its general acceptance to be secured? Municipal legislation could do much by providing for public improvements in accordance with plans which would embrace the character and distribution of parks, parkways, playgrounds,

public buildings, art galleries, libraries, hospitals, schools, charitable homes and asylums, bath houses, bathing beaches, etc., together with the construction of wide connecting avenues. Legal restrictions and inducements could secure the proper location of private philanthropic institutions in accordance with such a plan. Other measures for the government of tenement construction, the building of sewers, the paving and cleaning of streets and alleys, etc., would, of course, be necessary, as well as rigid regulations for the preservation of health. But behind all this and essential to it, must lie a powerful and compact body of public sentiment. That volume of opinion which would compel the official adoption of a general, symmetrical scheme for philanthropic expression, would also exert the influence necessary to bring private benevolence into conformity with it. Is this not possible to a city where wealth and public spirit and intelligence stand ready to enter upon a great and but slightly occupied field of philanthropic activity?

A few of the specific problems of philanthropy which await solution and should be embraced in any general scheme of improvement, may be profitably though briefly considered here as indicative of the local needs and the present status of philanthropic advancement. The city borders on Lake Michigan for approximately twenty-five miles and its extreme width is about ten miles. The main business district is eight miles from the northern corporation line. Extending to the north and south from the business centre, along the lake shore and widening like the rays of a fan as the distance from the centre increases, lie well-to-do residence sections. Extending west from the business centre lies another region chiefly occupied by the homes of persons in comfortable financial circumstances. To the northwest and southwest and dividing the western region of good homes from the similar regions extending along the lake to the north and south, lie two huge industrial communities, roughly triangular in outline, an acute angle of each reaching the business heart of the city. Swinging about the business centre in a rude semicircle with a radius of about a mile, and terminating near the lake shore to north and south, is a belt which forms the battleground between the retreating residence and advancing business districts. Upon this belt, of varying breadth, but averaging about a mile wide, buildings once the homes of prosperity, but now abandoned by the tenants for whom they were erected, are unprofit-

able property. As residences they are undesirable and their sites are not yet required for business houses. These buildings, often dilapidated and usually neglected, occupy streets which receive the minimum of attention from the city government. Pavements are broken and worn into deep holes and ruts, alleys are choked with refuse, and the street-cleaning gangs appear in some portions not oftener than twice a year.

The houses in this belt swarm with tenants of the poorest class. They are usually of foreign nationality, and often ignorant and squalid, with little knowledge of, or interest in, their civic rights. It is upon this semicircle of stagnant real estate values that the greatest congestion of population is found, and the highest ratio of dependent poverty. Of the 11,760 families whose needs were brought to the attention of the Chicago Bureau of Charities in the fiscal year ending May 31, 1902, about 40 per cent lived in this borderland between business and residence districts. As the buildings are low, the actual intensity of the crowding of inhabitants is not adequately indicated by statistics showing the number of persons to the acre or square. A canvass of selected neighborhoods by the City Homes Association in the summer of 1900, showed a population of 467 persons to the acre in the most densely crowded square inspected. This population in houses of two or three floors, and houses, too, not erected for crowds of tenants, but rudely and cheaply altered to meet the present demands, may well indicate conditions more serious than would a larger population in taller houses built as tenements. Behind many of these old houses, and reached by narrow passages or through alleys, are rear tenements; cheap structures built for the purpose or remodeled out-buildings used in former times as stables, carriage houses, etc. The deplorable conditions which prevail in the front buildings are usually more aggravated in those in the rear. In the districts included in the investigation by the City Homes Association, 3,117 houses were inspected containing a population of 45,643 persons. Of these houses 730, sheltering a population of 6,545 persons, were on the rear of lots and with no street frontage.

Here lies Chicago's present housing problem. Its solution is possibly complicated by the fact that with the expansion of the city's business centre, the poverty belt which borders it may be forced outward. Model tenements or substantial buildings erected to meet

present needs might then be deserted at heavy loss to the owners. The probability of any such general shifting of this population, however, seems remote, as the extension of the business district, in late years, has been along lines which will affect the described belt at only two or three points. As the people of the class now inhabiting this region increase in number, the tendency is for the overflow to spread toward the west, where the barriers to such expansion are few and the movement of well-to-do residents away from proximity to business streets is most marked. It has already come about, therefore, that unfavorable tenement conditions are found most intensified and pervading a larger body of population along the western rim of this semicircle than elsewhere. The principal efforts at regeneration will have to be directed toward that point.

The City Homes Association, composed of representative citizens and leaders in philanthropic activities, has made a survey of housing conditions, which is certain to serve as a foundation for future remedial action. A comprehensive building ordinance in which provision is made for light, ventilation, sanitation, protection from fire, etc., in tenements to be hereafter erected, has recently been enacted, chiefly through the influence of the association. The fact is of interest that branches of the Chicago River bound or penetrate the belt described in such a manner as to give it a shore line of several miles. It is hoped that in time small parks, playgrounds and bathing beaches may be created along the waterside, thus carrying into the very heart of this sordid region, these powerful agencies of regeneration.

Beyond this semicircular borderland and extending to the northwest and southwest, lie the industrial districts before mentioned. Each district contains a population estimated at more than 300,000, and in each, substantially all the residents depend for a livelihood upon industries within the district boundaries. In neither is the percentage of dependent poverty normally large and in both the number of wealthy individuals is proportionally remarkably small. In the southwestern district the conditions to be described are more clearly defined, and of them it is the purpose to speak particularly, although what may be said also applies with approximate accuracy to the northwestern region.

In its greatest length this district to the southwest stretches from east to west about seven miles, while its width from north to

south is about three miles. The western half is sparsely inhabited, open spaces separating the houses into isolated groups. The eastern half is closely built. Houses are ordinarily of frame construction and of a monotonous similarity of appearance. Large sections are checkered by streets which have been "filled in" until the lower floors of the houses are from two to six feet below street grade. Sewerage is inadequate and these sunken squares are frequently flooded and rarely dry. Streets are paved in an inferior manner and repairs are neglected. In many portions of the district the interval between visits of the street-cleaning gang is not shorter than six months. The entire area is flat and featureless in its physical aspects.

In its social aspects the district is hardly less monotonous than in its physical conformation. Agencies of a social character such as are to be expected in any urban community are absent or are few and weak. In a city of 300,000 population the number of churches is ordinarily from 150 to 200 or more. In this district of 300,000 persons the churches do not exceed fifty in number, and most of them are weak and struggling. Missions, kindergartens, clubs, classes, the activities which often gather about strong churches are rarely found and meagerly supported. The absence of relief-giving societies, however, has had a tendency to compel the churches to assume a burden of charity unusually heavy in proportion to their material resources; a result whose obvious advantages are prevented from reaching satisfactory development because of the weakness of the churches and the lack of the communal spirit which would foster co-operative and comprehensive measures. Certain fraternal societies have grown to considerable proportions among the Bohemians who form a large per-cent of the population of the district, and these guard the material welfare of their members in the manner usual among such organizations. In the northwestern district, Polish fraternal societies have reached a similar development. But these efforts are subject to the limitations of church or nationality and consequently lack the binding force necessary to affect the population in general. There are no parks, save one on the western edge of the district, or public playgrounds except in connection with two or three settlements. For the entire city of Chicago the number of pupils in high school averages one in each 200 of population. In this southwestern district the high-school enrollment is one in each 500 of population. The reason? Because as soon as children reach

high-school age they are withdrawn from school and set to earning wages. It is estimated that in round numbers, 50,000 persons are employed in the industries occupying this region. The chief of these industries are the manufacture of harvesting machinery, pianos, lumber, iron or steel and clothing. In the garment industries and in the twine mills connected with the harvester works, large numbers of boys and girls are employed.

In those general activities which draw a body of people together in mutual helpfulness, cultivate public spirit and inspire a sense of solidarity, this district is singularly lacking. The people, as a class, are industrious, self-respecting, law-abiding, independent. But they live close to the line beyond which is dependence. Their resources are small and any sharp departure from normal industrial conditions, such as illness or a "shut-down" or a strike, brings them quickly to distress. Here are problems of magnitude for philanthropy to solve. The field is ample for both public and private initiative. The awakening of this great "City of Dead Levels," as the region has been aptly designated, to its civic and social responsibilities, and the creation of such agencies for the diversification and amelioration of the life of the people as must come from without, will tax the intelligence and resources of all who may be enlisted in the effort.

Of the philanthropies of the city at large it is plain that much must be done in the strengthening of forces of helpfulness already organized and in the establishment of additional agencies. The tremendous social power of the church seems scarcely comprehended; the churches, as a rule, confining their efforts to the conventional Sunday and mid-week services, and to certain subsidiary societies which are intended rather to hold the allegiance of the membership than to exert a positive, aggressive influence in the community. Exceptions to this rule may here and there be noted, but the average church, with its costly and spacious edifice and its concentration of social and civic strength, allows its building to stand dark and empty the greater part of the time, while its energies and activities turn inward instead of outward. Greater strength must also be given to the health and building departments of the city government, and the active utilization of that strength must be encouraged and demanded by an outspoken public sentiment. In charity a lack of co-ordination prevents that unity of action and expression which



would assure, to reform movements, the momentum necessary to carry them to the highest success. Opinion is unformed or must be revised to meet the swiftly unfolding conditions which the city's growth produces. Chicago does not know its own mind in regard to public outdoor poor relief. It is in doubt whether the spirit of true charity should condition giving upon an investigation of the needs of the applicant. It has, until a year ago, been a winter Mecca for the nation's tramps, because the mayor clung tenaciously to the old, sentimental idea concerning mendicancy and threw the police stations open to the throngs of beggars at the first chilling blasts of December. Even now the mayor, each winter, calls upon private generosity for a charity fund to be disbursed through the police. The cash goes out quickly in the manner and with the results familiar to all who have observed police charity methods. This money is drawn from the public at that season in which the reliable, all-the-year-round charities must secure the principal part of their support, and the mayor's fund, with its advertising and exploitation of the poor, unquestionably absorbs money that would and should go to those private charities on which the burden falls with increased weight, after the mayor's spasmodic effort has subsided. The headlong speed of the city's growth and the magnitude of the results accomplished by commercial activity have created a spirit of impatience toward processes requiring a protracted period for their proper development, which must be corrected by the generation now coming into control. These weaknesses in the philanthropies of Chicago are mentioned as tangible indications that the work to be done is not only many-sided, but in some phases even elementary.

Signs are not wanting, however, of the vigor and enthusiasm with which Chicago's second generation is to enter upon the task of social improvement. There is a drawing together of forces in many quarters and much work of promise has been begun. Social settlements are already strongly intrenched in public esteem and their influence is plainly evident. A hopeful beginning has been made in the organization and co-ordination of charities through the charity organization society locally known as the Chicago Bureau of Charities, which already, after eight years of existence, has gained some measure of co-operation from over 500 organized agencies and is conducting an active propaganda in behalf of scientific study and procedure in dealing with individual and community charity prob-

lems. In behalf of dependent and delinquent children a juvenile court has been created, whose successful operation has attracted extended inquiry and commendation. The City Homes Association, already mentioned, is doing much to arouse interest in the proper housing of the poor and the provision of recreation spaces in crowded neighborhoods. Recently city bonds in the amount of \$2,500,000 have been voted for the creation of small parks and playgrounds. A representative committee is entering upon a campaign against tuberculosis. It is noteworthy that three strong forces are united in this committee, namely: The Visiting Nurse Association, the Cook County Medical Society and the Bureau of Charities. The committee is establishing a series of consultation rooms and dispensaries in the district offices of the Bureau of Charities. Each of these stations will be an educational centre, the purpose being to give much attention to instructing families how to protect themselves from contracting tuberculosis from afflicted members, and how, through the provision of fresh air and proper diet, to prevent or check the progress of the disease. Simple printed matter and inexpensive supplies of various kinds will also be distributed through the district dispensaries, as well as such medical preparations as have been found helpful. The Board of County Commissioners, which manages the county hospital, insane asylum, almshouse, jail and the public outdoor relief, has appointed advisory committees of professional and business men to assist in improving the administration of these large institutions.

Civic organizations whose purpose is to assist in forming and crystallizing sentiment in favor of high standards of public service are doing much for the city. The Merchants' Club, an influential body of business men, has undertaken to promote the use of public school buildings as neighborhood social centres. The Thomas Orchestra, which has been a very great influence in cultivating an appreciation of music, has been kept within the reach of all by fixing prices of admission to the concerts at such small amounts that a large annual deficit in support has been inevitable. While thousands of persons of small means have attended the concerts at twenty-five cents or fifty cents each, a group of public-spirited men has made up an annual loss of from \$25,000 to \$30,000. A Municipal Art League is devoting time and means to the promotion of whatever makes for beauty, cleanliness and wholesomeness.

Though the problems are many and formidable, it is impossible to regard the future without a sense of strong optimism. Chicago's motto is, "I will," and her virile young spirit of civic responsibility, under wise direction, will compel large results in the removal or abatement of conditions **which now unfavorably affect the lives of** her people.

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